



II Latin American Congress of National Parks and Other Protected Areas

Bariloche, Argentina
30 September to 6 October 2007

Time to bring Latin America back to the international agenda!

In Latin America protected areas always have constituted the major instrument for the conservation of nature. Nowadays, large portions of tropical forests, mountains, arid lands, temperate ecosystems and coastal and marine areas are legally protected. Because the region is the richest in biodiversity worldwide, conservation issues in Latin America received much attention from the global community after the Rio Summit during the 1990s. However, in the present decade biodiversity and hence protected areas decreased in priority since national and regional policies have concentrated more on economic development. In the meantime, the attention of the global society drifted to the alleviation of poverty and water scarcity and away from Latin America's biodiversity.



In spite of having lost its privileged position on the political agenda, the work of conservation authorities, local communities, the academy and NGOs has been constant and major results have been achieved. Latin America is now known for its strongly established national protected areas systems, and for its well-designed and implemented corridors and ecorregional initiatives. Administrative decentralization processes have resulted in the creation of protected areas of local, municipal and regional level. Thanks to its rich cultural diversity, the region is a leader in participatory management models, sustainable use areas and indigenous reserves. There has been a rapid increase of stakeholders that value and invest in the environmental services of protected areas, including water companies, private business, tourism and private land owners.

The threats on protected areas have not diminished during the last decade. On the contrary, several new, major threats have risen. Recently, climate change finally has become a global priority and the vast tropical ecosystems in Latin America are recognized as extremely vulnerable. Continental-wide infrastructure initiatives, like the Plan Puebla Panama and IIRSA, are likely to change the geography of the entire region. Economic integration and regional development policies have a direct impact on illegal trade, invasive species and colonization. Finally, the rapid expansion of biofuel crops like oil palm, sugarcane and soybean put a direct threat to the protected areas and its inhabitants.


All the previous calls for a major regional event, with global importance, to bring the Latin American protected areas back to the attention of the global society and to the national policy agendas. This is the perfect moment for the region to use the opportunities that Protected Areas provide to sustainable development, for adaptation to climate change and to guarantee the preservation of its enormous diversity.

HISTORY

In 1997, five years after the IV World Parks Congress in Caracas, IUCN (SUR and WCPA), the Latin American Cooperation Network of National Parks (REDPARQUES), FAO, and the Government of Colombia organized the first Latin American Congress of National Parks and Other Protected Areas in Santa Marta, Colombia. After IUCN hosted the Fifth World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003, and based on the recommendation of the Caracas Congress, REDPARQUES and WCPA requested collaboration from the IUCN secretariat, FAO and UNEP to organize the II Latin American Parks Congress. This event will take place in Argentina, in the first week of October 2007. The host of the event is the National Parks Agency of Argentina, and they selected the scenic environment of Bariloche, in Northern Patagonia, as the congress site. The region includes the largest and oldest Argentinean National Park (Nahuel Huapi) and home for the major indigenous population of the Southern Andes (Mapuche).

.WHAT IS THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE CONGRESS?

This congress has been one of the most rapidly organized major events. IUCN Sur, in collaboration with WCPA and supported by the Mesoamerican office, could only start in January 2007 with the practical organization of the Congress Programme. Since then, much progress has been achieved and now, 3 months before the event, we are completely on schedule. An overview:

- ☛ A robust programme has been developed, based on the four thematic areas of WCPA. Within these, and after a region wide consultation, sixteen priority themes were identified. A series of institutional partners and groups of individual experts are responsible for the coordination of individual symposia for each of these themes. Key note speakers have been invited and are committed to provide a general overview of advances and trends in all themes.
 - ☛ Over seventy workshops and round table discussions are planned, including a wide variety of issues: PA categories and systems, traditional knowledge for PA management, governance and participatory management, management effectiveness, World Heritage Sites and Biosphere reserves, impact of globalization and international commerce, regional policies, poverty and protected areas, science and knowledge management, training for PA managers, sustainable economic activities, private sector involvement, ecosystem approach to PA management, compensation schemes for environmental services and many more.
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- ☛ Besides the coordination of the congress programme, IUCN is responsible for one of the most essential symposia, on policies, instruments and incentives for poverty relief and the achievement of the MDGs. IUCN also organizes a workshop on indigenous groups in voluntary isolation.
 - ☛ Three cross cutting themes (climate change, indigenous peoples and marine areas) will form a red line through the entire congress programme. The deputy secretary for indigenous affairs of Argentina (Jorge Nahuel) will host an indigenous and local communities forum during the six days of the congress.
 - ☛ A total of over 30 national and international NGOs, government agencies and thematic work groups are directly involved with the organization of the programme.
 - ☛ At the moment, the symposium coordinators are evaluating the 1100 abstracts that have been submitted for all symposia and workshops.
 - ☛ Six pre-congress courses and over a dozen side events are being planned.
 - ☛ In all countries of Latin America, inter-institutional platforms are developing situation reports that will be integrated in a regional report to be presented at the congress. This process, lead by WCPA, will serve as well at the regions preparation for the Programme of Work for CBD.
 - ☛ At the moment, over 700,000 US dollars in cash have been raised from different donors (particularly GTZ, OAPN Spain, Fundación Biodiversidad Spain, Moore Foundation, UNESCO, CAF, UNEP, Secretary for Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina, MacArthur foundation and FAO) to directly support the countries preparation, the congress organization of the and the participation of delegations. The in-kind contribution of major supporting organizations, through staff time, participation, support to partners etc., is valued at several millions.
 - ☛ The local organization (Parks Argentina) is finishing all logistic arrangements in Bariloche. The event will be organized in two large hotels and the city is ready to receive the expected 1500 participants. Accommodation of all kinds is widely available in this tourist area. The IUCN Argentinean Committee is implementing a communications and positioning strategy for the congress.
 - ☛ During the last months before the congress, the organization is concentrating on the main product: a political strategical message that will be presented to the governments of the region, to the CBD and to the WCC in Barcelona. Pedro Rosabal (PPA) developed a first draft of the Bariloche Declaration that will be validated by a high-profile expert team in the region and discussed at the congress.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There are several things you can do, as part of the IUCN family, to make this congress a success

- ☞ Participate!
- ☞ Engage with WCPA to support the preparation process in each of the countries.
- ☞ Engage with specific issues, and support the technical organization of symposia and workshops.
- ☞ Support IUCN Sur in the development of the symposium and the workshop under their direct coordination.
- ☞ Send or bring with you any material on IUCN worldwide (publications, flyers, posters, promotion material) that can be presented at the IUCN meeting point during the congress.
- ☞ Identify projects, processes or initiatives that can adopt (part of) the results of the congress.
- ☞ Help us to find more financial and logistic support.
- ☞ Support the development of the Bariloche Declaration.
- ☞ Help us to bring the results from Bariloche to Barcelona.
- ☞ Widely disseminate the congress, its goals and results.
- ☞ Regularly check the congress website, as well as the IUCN (global and SUR) websites, for updates and news about the congress.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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<http://www.congresolatinoparques2007.org>

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